

VZCZCXRO0385

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DE RUEHLJ #0367/01 3291931
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 251931Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY LJUBLJANA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7582
INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0063
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LJUBLJANA 000367

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/25/2019

TAGS: [NATO](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [AF](#) [SI](#)

SUBJECT: SLOVENIA WILL DEEPEN ENGAGEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

REF: A. STATE 120807

[B. LJUBLJANA 356](#)

[C. LJUBLJANA 349](#)

[D. LJUBLJANA 337](#)

Classified By: CDA Brad Freden, E.O. 12958, reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

1.(C//NF) Summary. Slovenia is looking forward to the rollout of President Obama's Afghanistan Strategy and will key its public diplomacy to ours. Foreign Minister Zbogar plans to announce the deployment of Slovenia's OMLT in Herat and Ljubljana's plans for civilian reconstruction projects in Afghanistan at the December 3-4 NATO Ministerial. Slovenia's decision to deploy an OMLT without functional caveats is a major accomplishment, particularly in light of the fact that opposition to Slovenia's involvement in Afghanistan remains strong among the general public. End summary.

2.(C) CDA delivered reftel demarche on November 25 to Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director-General for Multilateral and Global Affairs Andrej Benedejcic. Benedejcic welcomed further international community engagement in Afghanistan and said that Slovenia was very much looking forward to President Obama's upcoming Afghanistan strategy rollout. He asked that Washington take into account the OSCE Ministerial in Athens when considering the timing of the President's announcement. Benedejcic also asked us to provide as much advance notice as possible of the President's speech so that the Government of Slovenia (GOS) can prepare its senior leadership to appropriately respond before the December 3-4 NATO Ministerial.

3.(C) Benedejcic said President Obama's message would offer the GOS a good public diplomacy tool to garner greater public support for Slovenia's continued involvement in Afghanistan. In this regard, he noted the importance of ISAF's UN mandate, a fact that even many Slovenian MPs were not aware of. According to Benedejcic, Slovenia sees an important role for itself in helping the Afghans transition to running their own affairs. Benedejcic said that further "Afghanisization" was critical for the overall strategy as ISAF looked to the future. He noted benchmarks were particularly important for this process and Secretary Clinton's November 19 message was right on target. Slovenia would like to see President Karzai succeed and is committed to assist Afghanistan, but to do so, Karzai will need to seriously address corruption and build consensus within Afghanistan. Benedejcic explained that it was "crucial" for Washington to convey this message to Kabul.

4.(C//NF) Benedejcic told CDA that Foreign Minister Zbogar will have two concrete deliverables for the December NATO Ministerial. The FM plans to announce that the government has approved deployment of Slovenia's Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT). The OMLT's geographical caveat will remain in place, so that Slovenia can focus its work on Herat, but there will be no functional caveats. Benedejcic explained that the Slovenian Ministry of Defense reached this

decision on the basis of an on-the-ground assessment that continued engagement in Herat will send a strong signal to the local Afghans that Slovenia was with them for the long run. The decision to scrap functional caveats is a recognition by the Government that Slovenian trainers must be allowed to conduct operations with their Afghan counterparts.

Slovenia will likely increase the number of soldiers deployed in Afghanistan by 10-15 (from the current 81), primarily to provide force protection for the OMLT.

15. (C//NF) FM Zbogar will also announce that his government has adopted a resolution on civilian reconstruction. Slovenia plans to focus its aid on rural development and agriculture. Other projects will target veterinary health, good governance, cooperation between Slovenian and Afghan universities, and empowerment of women. Benedejcic noted that the plan to both lift functional caveats and provide reconstruction aid was well received by parliamentarians.

6.(C//NF) Comment. Slovenia's decision to deploy an OMLT without functional caveats is a major accomplishment, especially since opposition to Slovenia's involvement in Afghanistan came primarily from members of the ruling coalition. Our active and consistent engagement at the highest levels to ensure Slovenia's continued involvement in Afghanistan appears to have paid off. Benedejcic noted how important messaging was from the United States. He praised the events surrounding the recent NATO Strategic Concept Review meeting in Slovenia, which played a very positive role in convincing parliamentarians of the need for continued Slovene engagement in Afghanistan. The Government will need to be equally persuasive when it comes time to explain its

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policy to the general public. With this in mind, the GOS is anxiously awaiting the roll-out of President Obama's decision on the way forward. End comment.

FREDEN